

CHILDREN'S LANGUAGES OF FILM APPRECIATION

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to understand what children appreciate in the films E. T.: The Extra Terrestrial (ET) and Saving Private Ryan (SPR). The study consisted of a sample of 93 school children of class XI aged between 15-17 years. A film appreciation instrument was designed drawing insights from Teasley and Wilder (1997). The research study was quantitative in nature. It was found that the percentage of girls is more in the appreciation of literary aspects in the film ET and SPR in comparison to boys. The other important finding of the study is that the percentage of boys is more compared to girls with respect to the appreciation of dramatic and cinematic aspects of the two films.

KEYWORDS: *Appreciation, Literary Aspects, Dramatic Aspects & Cinematic Aspects*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Films are an excellent medium to teach children. It helps the children to know about the different cultures and it gives them a clear understanding about different values of diverse cultures. Films form the central part of the entertainment for children and they enjoy the most by watching films. While the children watching the films encounter various experiences. While watching films some children are deeply involved and identify themselves with the characters of the film with the result depending on the situation they watch, laugh, cry, shout and express their feelings in multiple forms.

Oliver and Bartsch (2010, p. 76) defined appreciation as “the perception of deeper meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation to elaborate on thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience”. While working on audience response they pointed out that the experience of appreciation was not only limited to a specific genre but also associated with genres like dramas, tragedies, and even documentaries rather than comedies, romances or thrillers. Bartsch and Hartmann (2015) state that the appreciation arises from the combined presence of cognitive and affective challenges. Films that are cognitively and affectively challenging give rise to eudaimonic appreciation. Films with the content that produce empathy, justice, violation, moral dilemmas or unresolved controversial issues give rise to eudaimonic appreciation. Oliver and Bartsch (2010, p.131) also found that people often recounted both high levels of appreciation and enjoyment for many specific films indicating that responses of enjoyment and appreciation are not opposite reactions, but both enjoyment and appreciation contribute exclusively to a positive evaluation of the movie. According to Bartsch (2012) there are audiences who anticipate a deeper level of gratification like self-reflection or the perception of artistic value.

The gratifications provided by films are classified into two types reactive and reflective (Cupchik, 1994). The reactive type of gratification consists of films pertaining to contents just for pleasure, excitement or

sentimentality during the media experience (Oliver, 1993; Zillmann, 1988). The reflective level of gratification can be obtained by the audience through self-reflection and the perception of artistic value (Oliver, 2007). The reflective level of gratification can be encouraged through the process of film appreciation. The idea of film appreciation is construed as the slower, explanatory and reflective state of the film viewers, which is beyond reactive enjoyment (Lee, Cha and Nam 2015, p. 287). Film appreciation is connected with insights of great artistic value and with more emotional and thoughtful responses to films. The outcome of appreciation of films involve greater levels of thinking, deeper levels of processing and more thorough reflection wherein the result is more lasting or consisting of enduring responses (Lee, Cha & Nam, 2015, p. 289). Oliver & Hartmann, (2010) state that films that are meaningful often portray central values of life or what it means to lead a good life in agreement with one's values and ultimately how life should be. Such kind of values may involve mood behaviors, which are applied by the character of a film that in turn trigger certain values in the onlooker. Tamborini (2011) in a similar vein reasoned that the character actions are appraised on five different moral elements that are harm/care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and purity. These elements of morals are considered as "innate", "synaptic connections" and "combine past experiences and emotion" (p. 40). Therefore, these elements of morals are stimulated in an automatic and intuitive rather than in a rational and effortful manner (Haidt, 2001; Tamborini, 2011). A character exerting a moral behavior in a story may stimulate these moral elements and finally inspire viewers to contemplate life's meaning and inspire understanding (Tamborini, 2011). For the purpose of this study, two films E. T.: The Extra Terrestrial (ET) and Saving Private Ryan (SPR) were identified in consultation with experts in the area of film studies.

The Plot of the Film E. T.: The Extra Terrestrial (ET)

The story revolves around the friendship of two individuals, Elliott and ET.

Elliott in this film is 10 years old and is mostly seen spending time with his brother and his friends. One of the aliens visiting the planet earth is left behind and is found by Elliott, who later becomes friends and learns about each other. ET learns about the life on earth, and is soon lonely and desires to be with his family members but if Elliott helps him to go back home he will lose him forever.

The Plot of the Film Saving Private Ryan (SPR)

In this film the soldiers are assigned to find Private James Ryan and bring him back home. It is a film on World War II, June 1944. The film tells a courageous story of honor and duty under fire. The General is willing to risk the lives of eight men to save Private James Ryan to ease the suffering of a grieving family after their other three sons have died in action.

The researcher chose the above films to understand what the children would appreciate in these films. These two films mentioned above were selected by the researcher as the film contents in these two films formed understanding and cognitive differences which comprised depiction of human adversity, fairness, violation, ethical crisis or unanswered disputed issues giving rise to eudaimonic appreciation. According to Oliver and Hartmann (2010, p. 131) the experience of eudaimonic feelings of appreciation is conceptualized as one of the important dimensions of cinematic experience and not as being opposite to that of hedonic pleasure.

1.1 Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate what children appreciate in films E. T.: The Extra Terrestrial (ET) and Saving Private Ryan (SPR).

2. METHODOLOGY

The approach of this study is quantitative in nature. The study was carried out in Shamshabad district of Telangana, India. The sample comprised of 93 children aged between 15-17 years of age from standard XI. The 93 participants were purposively selected. This research was based on a descriptive research design to obtain information about children's film appreciation. After showing them the films E. T.: The Extra Terrestrial (ET) and Saving Private Ryan (SPR), the researcher administered the *film appreciation instrument* to obtain childrens' responses. The film appreciation instrument has the following three major aspects:

- Literary aspects
- Dramatic aspects
- Cinematic aspects

The components of literary aspects include story, theme, dialogue, and characters. In dramatic aspects the components are actors, acting, sets/background and costumes and the components in cinematic aspects include camera movements, visual effects, voice-over, sound effects and music.

The instrument is designed with a 5-point scale. Film appreciation of children is construed on spectrum with one end as very high appreciation and the other end as no appreciation. The number 5 indicates "*Very High Appreciation*", the number 4 indicates "*High Appreciation*", the number 3 indicates "*Moderate Appreciation*", the number 2 indicates "*Less Appreciation*", and the number 1 indicates "*No Appreciation*". The instrument represents a minimum score of 13 and the maximum score of 65.

The instrument of the study was standardized through a pilot study by adopting a test and re-test method. The pilot study was repeated twice for establishing the reliability of the instrument. The duration between the test and re-test was 20 days. The sample selected for pilot study was 40 school children selected from a government school of Shamshabad district of Telangana State, South India. The statistical results showed that the mean value was 50 and the standard deviation was 2.8 during the first pilot study. In the second pilot test, mean was 51 and standard deviation was 2.7. The reliability coefficient (r) was found to be 0.79. Since the reliability coefficient (r) was found to be significant the test was finalized for the study.

The film appreciation instrument was administered among children after the film was shown to them. Their responses were collected and analyzed by applying appropriate statistical techniques. The distribution of the sample with respect to film appreciation of the films ET and SPR are presented in the below section. For the purpose of interpretation, the responses of children were categorized into three ranges- high, medium and low. Since the data collected is based on ranks, the non-parametric statistical methods were adopted for analysis and interpretation of the data.

3. APPRECIATION OF LITERARY ASPECTS OF FILMS ET AND SPR

As discussed above, the literary aspects are the aspects like plot, characters, settings, themes, point of view, repeated images, and symbols that share with the literature. It is stated that children in most of the reasons for liking a particular film are on this literary level. The children like the characters or the plot (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p.15).

The components in the literary aspects consist of story, theme, dialogues, and characters.

The distribution of sample with respect to children's film appreciation of literary aspects in ET & SPR is presented below.

3.1 Distribution of Children with respect to Appreciation of Literary Aspects of films ET and SPR

Table 1

Appreciation of Literary Aspects of Films ET and SPR									
		Appreciation of Film ET-LA				Appreciation of Film SPR-LA			
		Low	Moderate	High	Total	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Boys	Count	5	29	12	46	5	25	16	46
	% within Gender	10.9%	63.0%	26.1%	100.0%	10.9%	54.3%	34.8%	100.0%
Girls	Count	6	16	25	47	6	14	27	47
	% within Gender	12.8%	34.0%	53.2%	100.0%	12.8%	29.8%	57.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	11	45	37	93	11	39	43	93
	% within Gender	11.8%	48.4%	39.8%	100.0%	11.8%	41.9%	46.2%	100.0%

From the above table the following inferences are drawn. 11.8% of children, have a low level of appreciation of literary aspects in the film ET, 48.4% of children have moderate level of appreciation of literary aspects in the film ET and 39.8% of children are with high level of appreciation of literary aspects of the film ET.

For the film SPR the above table reveals that 11.8% of children, have a low level of appreciation of literary aspects in the film SPR, 41.9% of children are with moderate level of appreciation of literary aspects, and 46.2% of children are with high level of appreciation of literary aspects in the film SPR.

The gender wise analysis of data in relation to the levels of appreciation of literary aspects of the films ET and SPR is as follows:

Among boys 10.9% of boys have low levels of appreciation of literary aspects in the film ET, 63.0% of them are with moderate level of film appreciation of literary aspects in the film ET and 26.1% of them are with high level of film appreciation of literary aspects in the film ET.

The percentage of girls with low levels of appreciation for literary aspects in the film ET is 12.8%, 34.0% are with moderate levels of appreciation of literary aspects in the film ET, and 53.2% of them are with high levels of appreciation of literary aspects in the film ET.

In relation to the film SPR 10.9% of boys are with low levels of appreciation of literary aspects, 54.3% of children are with moderate levels of appreciation of literary aspects and 34.8% of them are with high levels of appreciation of literary aspects.

Whereas 12.8% of girls are with low levels of appreciation of literary aspects, 29.8% are with moderate levels of appreciation of literary aspects and 57.4% of them are with high levels of appreciation of literary aspects of the film SPR.

It is evident that the level of appreciation of literary aspects related to the films ET and SPR is high among girls compared to boys.

4. APPRECIATION OF DRAMATIC ASPECTS OF THE FILMS ET AND SPR

The dramatic aspects are comprised of three components, which are actors and their actions, make-up/dress/costume and props/set/background/outdoor locations (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p. 18). For this study the dramatic aspects comprise of actors, acting, sets/background, and costumes. The distribution of sample with respect to children's appreciation of dramatic aspects of the films ET and SPR are presented below.

4.1 Distribution of Children with respect to Appreciation of Dramatic Aspects of the films ET and SPR

Table 2

Appreciation of Dramatic Aspects of the Films ET and SPR									
		Appreciation of the Film ET-DA				Appreciation of the Film SPR-DA			
		Low	Moderate	High	Total	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Boys	Count	5	15	26	46	5	16	25	46
	% within Gender	10.9%	32.6%	56.5%	100.0%	10.9%	34.8%	54.3%	100.0%
Girls	Count	6	31	10	47	6	27	14	47
	% within Gender	12.8%	66.0%	21.3%	100.0%	12.8%	57.4%	29.8%	100.0%
Total	Count	11	46	36	93	11	43	39	93
	% within Gender	11.8%	49.5%	38.7%	100.0%	11.8%	46.2%	41.9%	100.0%

From the above table the following inferences are drawn. 11.8% of children, have a low level of appreciation of dramatic aspects in the film ET, 49.5% of children have moderate level of appreciation of dramatic aspects in the film ET and 38.7% of children are with high level of appreciation of dramatic aspects of the film ET.

In relation to the film SPR the data reveal that 11.8% of children, have a low level of appreciation with respect to the dramatic aspects in the film SPR, 46.2% of children are with moderate level of appreciation of dramatic aspects, and 41.9% of children are with high level of appreciation of dramatic aspects in the film SPR.

The gender wise analysis of data in relation to the levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects of the films ET and SPR is as follows:

Among boys 10.9% of boys have low levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects in the film ET, 32.6% of them are with moderate level of film appreciation of dramatic aspects in the film ET and 56.5% of them are with high level of film appreciation of dramatic aspects in the film ET.

The percentage of girls with low levels of appreciation for the dramatic aspects in the film ET is 12.8%, 66.0% are with moderate levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects in the film ET, and 21.3% of them are with high levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects in the film ET.

In relation to the film SPR 10.9% of boys are with low levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects, 34.8% of children are with moderate levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects and 54.3% of them are with high levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects.

Whereas 12.8% of girls are with low levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects, 57.4% are with moderate levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects and 29.8% of them are with high levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects of the film SPR.

It is evident that the percentage of boys with high levels of appreciation of dramatic aspects for both the films ET and SPR is high compared to girls.

5. APPRECIATION OF CINEMATIC ASPECTS OF THE FILMS ET AND SPR

The technical terms that define cinematography, sound, editing, and visual aspects are termed as cinematic aspects (Teasley & Wilder, 1997, p.19).

The cinematic aspects are comprised of three elements which are camera movements, visual effects, voice-over, sound effects, and music. In the present study children's appreciation of cinematic aspects of the films ET and SPR are studied. The distribution of the sample with respect to children's appreciation of cinematic aspects of the films ET and SPR are presented below.

5.1 Distribution of Children with respect to their Appreciation of Cinematic Aspects of the films ET and SPR

Table 3

Appreciation of Cinematic Aspects of the Films ET and SPR									
		Appreciation of the Film ET-CA				Appreciation of the Film SPR-CA			
		Low	Moderate	High	Total	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Boys	Count	5	16	25	46	5	18	23	46
	% within Gender	10.9%	34.8%	54.3%	100.0%	10.9%	39.1%	50.0%	100.0%
Girls	Count	7	26	14	47	6	29	12	47
	% within Gender	14.9%	55.3%	29.8%	100.0%	12.8%	61.7%	25.5%	100.0%
Total	Count	12	42	39	93	11	47	35	93
	% within Gender	12.9%	45.2%	41.9%	100.0%	11.8%	50.5%	37.6%	100.0%

From the above table the following inferences are drawn. 12.9% of children, have a low level of appreciation of cinematic aspects of the film ET, 45.2% of children have moderate level of appreciation of cinematic aspects, and 41.9% of children are with high level of appreciation of cinematic aspects of the film ET.

In the film SPR the data reveal that 11.8% of children, have a low level of appreciation of cinematic aspects for the film SPR, 50.5% of children are with moderate level of appreciation and 37.6% are with high level of appreciation of cinematic aspects in the film SPR.

The gender wise analysis of data in relation to the levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects of the films ET and SPR is as follows:

Among boys 10.9% of boys have low levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects in the film ET, 34.8% of them are with moderate levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects in the film ET and 54.3% of them are with high levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects in the film ET.

The percentage of girls with low levels of appreciation for cinematic aspects in the film ET is 14.9%, 55.3% are with moderate levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects in the film ET, and 29.8% of them are with high levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects in the film ET.

In relation to the film SPR 10.9% of boys are with low levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects, 39.1% of children are with moderate levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects and 50.0% of them are with high levels of

appreciation of cinematic aspects.

Whereas 12.8% of girls are with low levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects, 61.7% are with moderate levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects and 25.5% of them are with high levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects of the film SPR.

It is evident that the percentage of boys with high levels of appreciation of cinematic aspects for both the films ET and SPR is high compared to girls.

6. DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN WITH RESPECT TO APPRECIATION OF FILMS ET AND SPR

Table 4

Appreciation of Films ET and SPR									
		Appreciation of the Film ET				Appreciation of the Film SPR			
		Low	Moderate	High	Total	Low	Moderate	High	Total
Boys	Count	5	14	27	46	5	11	30	46
	% within Gender	10.9%	30.4%	58.7%	100.0%	10.9%	23.9%	65.2%	100.0%
Girls	Count	6	31	10	47	6	22	19	47
	% within Gender	12.8%	66.0%	21.3%	100.0%	12.8%	46.8%	40.4%	100.0%
Total	Count	11	45	37	93	11	33	49	93
	% within Gender	11.8%	48.4%	39.8%	100.0%	11.8%	35.5%	52.7%	100.0%

From the above table the following inferences are drawn. 11.8% of children, have low level of appreciation in the film ET, 48.4% of children have moderate level of appreciation in the film ET and 39.8% of children are with high level of appreciation of the film ET. In the film SPR 11.8% of children have low level of appreciation, 35.5% of children are with moderate level of appreciation and 52.7% of them are with high level of appreciation.

The gender wise analysis indicates that 10.9% of boys are with low level of appreciation in the film ET, 30.4% of boys are with moderate level of appreciation in the film ET and 58.7% of them are with high level of appreciation of the film ET. The percentage of girls with low level of appreciation are 12.8% in the film ET, 66.0% are with moderate level of appreciation in the film ET, and 21.3% of them are with high level of appreciation of the film ET.

In relation to the film SPR the data indicates that 10.9% of boys are with low level of appreciation in the film SPR, 23.9% of boys are with moderate level of appreciation and 65.2% of them are with high level of appreciation. In the film SPR 12.8% of girls are with low level of appreciation, 46.8% are with moderate level of appreciation and 40.4% of them are with high level of appreciation of the film SPR.

The above table indicates that there are differences between the responses of boys and girls with respect to their appreciation in the films ET & SPR. In order to know whether boys and girls differ statistically with respect to their levels of appreciation of films ET & SPR, it was felt desirable to examine the difference between boys and girls with respect to their levels of appreciation of films ET & SPR with appropriate statistical test. For this purpose, the following hypothesis is formulated.

Boys and girls differ significantly with respect to their levels of appreciation of films ET and SPR.

The above hypothesis is translated into null form and it is tested with Mann-Whitney non parametric statistical test. The results are furnished below.

6.1 Distribution of Mean Ranks and Mann-Whitney-U of Appreciation of Films ET and SPR

Table 5

Mean Ranks and Mann-Whitney-U of Appreciation of the Films ET and SPR					
Gender	N	A-ET Mean Rank	A-ET Sum of Ranks	A-SPR Mean Rank	A-SPR Sum of Ranks
Boys	46	55.02	2531.00	52.35	2408.00
Girls	47	39.15	1840.00	41.77	1963.00
Total	93				

	A-ET	A-SPR
Mann-Whitney U	712.000	835.000
Wilcoxon W	1840.000	1963.000
Z	-3.127	-2.104
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.035

From the above table it is observed that the mean rank of boys is 55.02 in the film ET and 52.35 in the film SPR. The mean rank of girls is 39.15 in the film ET, 41.77 in the film SPR. From the Mann-Whitney test statistical analysis it is found that the U value is 712 in film ET and 835 in the film SPR. The Z score is -3.127 in the film ET and -2.104 in the film SPR. The p value is 0.002 in the film ET and 0.035 in the film SPR. The p value is a measure of the strength of the evidence of data against null hypothesis. The smaller the p value the stronger the sample evidence for rejecting null hypothesis. The p value indicates that there are only 2% and 3.5% of chances that the null hypothesis is correct. Hence, the sample results are not consistent with a null hypothesis that is true. Since the p value is small enough it is concluded that the sample is so incompatible with the null hypothesis that one can reject the null for the entire population. Hence, it can be inferred that boys and girls differ significantly with respect to their appreciation of films ET and SPR. In other words on the basis of the strong evidence (p value <0.05 i. e. 0.02, 0.035) the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted therefore, it is concluded that the difference between boys and girls with respect to appreciation of films ET and SPR is statistically significant.

Bartsch and Hartmann, (2015) state that the encounter of appreciation arises from the combined presence of cognitive and affective challenges. Entertainment that is cognitively and affectively challenging give rise to eudaimonic appreciation. Film contents that produce empathy, justice, violation, moral dilemmas or unresolved controversial issues give rise to eudaimonic appreciation.

7. CONCLUSIONS

What children appreciate in films is always a fascinating subject for research on children. This research study has given an opportunity to the children to reflect on language, cultural practices, characters, plot, story while watching the films and grow from their personal experiences. It has given wide exposure to the multiple realities of life through self-reflection and inspirational experiences. Children deeply involved in watching the two films and expressed their willingness to watch them again and again. They have also asked the researchers a number questions about the various episodes and characters. Analysis of children's responses of films clearly indicates that children appreciate literary, dramatic and cinematic aspects of films. The results from this study show that the percentage of girls was high in the literary aspects of film appreciation of ET and SPR in comparison to boys. The percentage of boys was more in comparison to girls in the appreciation of dramatic and cinematic aspects of the films ET and SPR. The contemporary research in film studies highlighted the seminal role of films in teaching and learning. Alan B. Teasley & Ann Wilder

(1997) emphasized the importance of the above discussed three-part framework of film viewing and its creative role in classrooms and learning. The framework of literary-dramatic-cinematic aspects of film viewing would also help teachers to understand what actually children appreciate in films and how to design pedagogical strategies for dialogic and cooperative learning.

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